



Government of the District of Columbia

DC Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2008

I. Call to order

Stacey Long called to order the regular meeting of the DC Commission for Women at 6:40 pm on Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at 441 4th Street NW, Room 1112 South.

II. Attendees

The following persons were present: Towan Isom, Debbie Billet-Roumell, Shari Miles-Cohen, Cynthia Harrison, Gina Paige, Ruby Moy, and Winona Lake Scott.

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

Minutes approved.

- We need candidates for slots for Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer

IV. Business

- Cynthia and the legislative committee have developed a template for presenting legislation. (SEE ATTACHED)

TANF BENEFITS

- Discussed efforts for commission to advocate an increase for Washington DC TANF benefits from \$427 to \$490 and consistently each year thereafter. Short-term goal is to reach \$526 the equivalent of Maryland's TANF, long-term goal is to reach \$1000.

ACTION ITEM: Stacey Long will draft a letter on behalf of the commission for the council to support TANF Benefits and send next steps for TANF.

HPV/ VACCINATION

Debate is heating up about whether or not to require District of Columbia to be vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which causes virtually all cases of cervical cancer and genital warts.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HPV infects approximately 20 million people in the United States with 6.2 million new cases each year. There is no treatment for HPV, only treatment for related health problems. There are more than 30 strains of

HPV that affect at least half of sexually active people in their lifetime. Most strains of HPV do not produce any symptoms and disappear on their own.

Even after recommendations by the ACIP, school vaccination requirements are decided mostly by state legislatures. Some state legislatures have granted regulatory bodies such as the Health Department the power to require vaccines, but they still need the legislature to provide funding.

The debate in states has centered--in part--around school vaccine requirements, which are determined by individual states. Some states grant regulatory bodies, like the Board of Health, the power to require vaccines, but the legislature must still provide funding. Some people who support availability of the vaccine do not support a school mandate, citing concerns about the drug's cost, safety, and parents' rights to refuse. Still others may have moral objections related to a vaccine mandate for a sexually transmitted disease. Financing is another concern: if states make the vaccine mandatory, they must also address funding issues, including for Medicaid and SCHIP coverage and youth who are uninsured, and whether to require coverage by insurance plans. This has caused some to push for further discussion and debate about whether or not to require the vaccine.

The CDC announced that the HPV vaccine is available through the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program in all 50 states, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio and Washington DC. VFC provides vaccines for children ages nine to 18 who are covered by Medicaid, Alaskan-Native or Native American children, and some underinsured or uninsured children.

ACTION ITEM: Debbie Billet-Roumell solicited the commission's help to work with *WoW* to get the word out, work with council members to get their support for the 2009 school year, and identify the mayor's stance on the bill...*his support not position.*

NACW/ Compliance Assistance —Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Covered employers must grant an eligible employee up to a total of 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for one or more of the following reasons:

- for the birth and care of the newborn child of the employee;
- for placement with the employee of a son or daughter for adoption or foster care;
- to care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition; or

- to take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition.

The NACW is gathering support for the above labor law and is proposing support from other commissions. We are well on our way to completing two documents for your organizations to review and sign onto: a set of comments on the expansion of the FMLA for military family members and a set of comments objecting to the restrictive proposed changes to the FMLA. But we need your ongoing participation. Please read on to find out what's going on, and how you can get involved.

- **The FMLA Coalition group comments will be circulated early next week.** Let us know right away once you have organizational approval to sign on. We aim to have at least 100 organizations sign on to the group comments!
- **Please reach out to your members and encourage them to submit comments if you have not done so already.** Many thanks to those of you who have already started outreach to your memberships, networks, and listservs. Please continue your efforts to ensure that we generate tens of thousands of comments!
- **Contact us if you have questions about the best way to use your technology to make sure it's easy for your members to submit comments.** DOL's process is cumbersome and its web form is difficult to use, but we have suggestions for working around these issues.

ACTION ITEM: Sign the petition to support the NACW Family Medical Leave Act.

MAKE A POWERFUL NOISE FILM SCREENING

Make A Powerful Noise Film is about Hanh, an HIV-positive widow in Vietnam. Nada, a survivor of the Bosnian war; and Jacqueline works the slums of Bamako, Mali. Three very different lives. Three vastly different worlds. But they share something in common: Power. These women are each overcoming gender barriers to rise up and claim a voice in their societies. Through their empowerment and ability to empower others, Hanh, Nada and Jacqueline are sparking remarkable changes--Fighting AIDS. rebuilding communities. And educating girls.

- Hanh learned that she had contracted HIV after her husband and daughter died from AIDS. Bouncing back from despair, she started a self-help group in Vietnam, called Immortal Flower, to give people living with HIV/AIDS a place for support, counseling and health care.
- Nada is a working mother of three children. As a refugee, she survived the Bosnian War. Her women's association, Maya Kravica, is helping ease hostilities between Serbs and Bosniaks in a region marred by war crimes and massive destruction. Nada is building an agricultural cooperative to offer employment opportunities for war widows, and fair trade markets for families to sell their crops and livestock.

ACTION ITEM: Follow-up with Sheila Johnson, film's producer and her staff to host a screening in the District of Columbia in the fall as part of the Commission's Anniversary Celebration events.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

MAY 2008

- Baby Shower (May 9th)
- National Symposium on Women of Color in Business (May 6-7)
- DC Women's Agenda / Lunch and Learn session (DATE: TBD)
- NEXT COMMISSION MEETING on May 13, 2008

JUNE 2008

- Veterans Forum event

V. Adjournment

Stacey Long adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Towan Isom; Minutes approved by: DCFW